

# WESTERN INFERNNO

## MORE THAN 90 LARGE WILDFIRES BLAZE ACROSS THE REGION



A firefighter walks away from a smoke-filled hillside while fighting the First Creek Fire Aug. 18 near Chelan, Wash.

Ted S. Warren/Associated Press

### Wildfires burn through budgets as quickly as timber and grazing land

Staff and wire reports

**M**ore than 90 large wildfires are burning across the West, stretching firefighting resources as they destroy huge swaths of timber and grazing land, and level or endanger hundreds of homes and businesses.

In all, more than 1.1 million acres have burned.

The U.S. Forest Service expects to spend more than half its budget — 52 percent — on fire suppression this year, further squeezing forest restoration, watershed and landscape management programs, according to an agency report.

While demand for fire resources has surged across the West, the supply is quickly becoming tapped.

The Pacific Northwest is one of three regions nationwide under a wildfire Preparedness Level 5, which means there are more than 14 uncontained large fires exhausting local agencies.

The National Interagency Fire Center in Boise has given the Northwest top priority, though Northern California and the northern Rocky Mountains are also at Preparedness Level 5, and the Great Basin region — made up of portions of southern Idaho, Nevada, Utah and northern Arizona — is at Level 4.

“Most of the teams are not getting the support they want because resources are so thin,” said Kari Boyd-Peck, spokeswoman for the National Interagency Fire Center.

The situation is so urgent that 200 active-duty military troops have been pressed into service. It’s the first time since 2006 that soldiers have been mobilized for fire suppression.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources last week called out the National Guard to help battle an 18,000-acre blaze burning in south-central Washington on the southeastern slopes of Mount Adams.

Turn to FIRE, Page 12

# Capital Press

## The West's Ag Weekly

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 2015

★ VOLUME 88, NUMBER 34

WWW.CAPITALPRESS.COM

\$2.00



Ted S. Warren/Associated Press

Colby Lyon, of the Central Region Strike Force Team II, calls out instructions to other firefighters as they back-burn forest fuel to protect structures while fighting the First Creek Fire Aug. 18 near Chelan, Wash. Wildfires are putting such a strain on the nation’s firefighting resources that authorities have activated the military and sought international help to beat back scores of blazes burning uncontrolled throughout the dry West.

### MORE FIRE COVERAGE ON PAGE 12

- Ranchers fighting one of nation’s largest
- Chelan FFA adviser loses home to wildfire
- Wildfire claims apple packing plant
- Ranchers, USDA spar over forest management



Sy Bean/The Seattle Times via AP

Firefighter John Peterson works to control flames as they run south on Apple Acres Road outside Chelan, Wash., on Aug. 15. The wildfire caused massive damage to homes and an apple packing plant in the area.

## Oregon’s Canyon Complex fire has grown to 63 square miles and destroyed at least 36 houses. An additional 500 structures are threatened, as are the communities of Canyon City and John Day.

## Strong El Nino now likely, but don’t expect end to drought

By TIM HEARDEN  
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Forecasters now believe the West is in for historic El Nino conditions this winter, but they still caution that even a wet year won’t end California’s drought.

Sea-surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean could reach an average of 3.6 degrees above normal, which has only happened three times in the past 65 years, Climate

Prediction Center officials said.

The readings point to a strong El Nino that could produce the kind of wet winter that California saw in 1982-83 and 1997-98, when nearly double the state’s average precipitation fell, forecasters say.

But while El Nino is known for its robust southern storms, such an outcome is far from a sure thing, they warn.

“Climate systems are far more complicated than just El Nino, so

none of the typical impacts (associated with El Nino) are guaranteed,” CPC deputy director Mike Halpert told reporters in an Aug. 13 conference call.

El Nino has already suppressed hurricane activity in the Atlantic Ocean and enhanced it in the eastern central Pacific — a phenomenon that could continue to influence monsoon storms, Michelle Mead, a National Weather Service warning coordinator in Sacramento, said. Monsoon

moisture has been cited as the cause of several unseasonable rainstorms in parts of California this summer.

As it is, long-range models favor above-normal precipitation in the southern U.S. from Central California to Florida and up the East Coast and below-average precipitation in the Northern Rockies, the Great Lakes, Western Alaska and Hawaii, Halpert said.

Above-average temperatures are seen as likely in the Pacific North-

west and the rest of the northern U.S., as well as Alaska and Hawaii, he said. Typically, as El Nino pulls the jet stream south into California, it leaves the Northwest drier than normal.

Much will hinge on how El Nino’s warm water mass will interact with what forecasters call “the blob” — another mass of warm water in the northern Pacific that set up the

Turn to EL NINO, Page 14

## China’s currency devaluation worries ag exporters

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

A major devaluation of the Chinese yuan is sending shivers through many U.S. agricultural exporters, who fear a decline in sales to China. The big question is how much.

In an apparent move to shore up its economy and strengthen the position of its own exports, China devalued the yuan by 4 percent Aug. 10 and 11 and then brought it back up about 1 percent on Aug. 12.

It was China’s first major devaluation since 1994 and surprised investors and exporters globally. It caused currency devaluations by some of its Asian neighbors and volatility in worldwide stock markets.

Weakening the yuan against an already stronger dollar enhances U.S. buying power of Chinese goods but makes it more expensive for China to buy U.S. goods. It potentially affects all commodities headed in both directions.

U.S. agricultural exports to China more than doubled, from \$12.1 billion in 2008 to \$24.6 billion in 2014, according to the USDA. China became the No. 1 destination for U.S. agricultural exports, surpassing Canada, Mexico and Japan.

Soybeans, wheat, corn, other feeds, cotton, cattle hides, tree nuts and other horticultural products are top items headed to China.

Turn to CHINA, Page 14



A bank clerk counts Chinese currency notes Aug. 11 at a bank outlet in Huai-bei in central China’s Anhui province. China’s unexpected move last week to lower the value of its tightly leashed currency, the yuan, could impact agriculture exports to that country.

Chinatopix  
Associated Press

**CASCADE**  
FARM and OUTDOOR

598 N. Wilbur Ave., Walla Walla  
www.cascadefarmandoutdoor.com

### HARVEST BIG SAVINGS

Save on your favorite farm and outdoor products  
with this week’s Harvest Choice Special Values.

Available online. Prices good through August 26.

